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# BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

6TH MEETING  
OF YOUNG RESEARCHERS OF UNIVERSITY OF PORTO



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## CREDITS

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# Assessment of knowledge and behaviours of nutrition, hygiene and food safety of non-teaching staff at nursery schools.

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Pre-school is the first stage of basic education in the process of training and learning of a child's life. At the nursery school, children contact daily with a group of adults that symbolize role-models. Within this set, non-teaching staff: including sociocultural animators, education assistants and cooks, which mainly provide assistance at mealtime (lunch and morning and afternoon snacks), transmit concepts of food education to children [1]. The main objective of this study was to assess knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that these professionals apply in the context of daily food, to evaluate if both knowledge and behaviour are at an acceptable level, considering the role those professionals represent to children. This cross-sectional study consisted on the application of a questionnaire, which include a Portuguese version [2] of the *Nutritional Knowledge Questionnaire*, and a set of questions from the *Questionnaire for food-service staff* [3,4], to 270 people

A sample of 270 non-teaching staff from nursery schools at the Municipality of Vila Nova de Gaia, Portugal, was obtained. Participants, with age between 20 and 66 years ( $39 \pm 9.3$  years), shown that only basic nutrition messages are well understood, failing to understand more complex ones. More than 90% of participants know they should eat more fruit and vegetables, however, only 23.2% know the recommended amounts.

As the nutritional knowledge is low, there is no proportional relationship on translating of messages to food choices, and on associating health problems (such as cancer, hypertension and obesity) with intake of fruits and vegetables, salt and fat. The knowledge level of hygiene and food safety is good and higher than reported behaviours. The results show that for these professional, knowledge isn't transformed into behaviour, and they fail to apply it in their daily work. The assistants present more knowledge than cooks. However, cooks are the ones that receive more training; concluding that training isn't effective or misdirected.

The level of knowledge acquired is reasonable but should be improved, aiming for a structured training to fill the gaps in nutrition, hygiene and food safety knowledge, assessing constantly the transformation of the knowledge into behaviour.

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